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The International Churches of Christ Statement of Shared Beliefs

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International Churches of Christ Statement of Shared Beliefs

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17.23 NIV

The following longstanding biblical doctrines and cooperative ideals have already guided us well on our journey thus far. These statements begin with the highest historical Christian essentials and move toward our common aspirations to be well-connected in Christ.

GOD: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in and we surrender our lives to the one God who made the heavens and earth and who breathed life into humanity. We worship and praise the Father who spoke the world into existence. We worship and praise Jesus, the Son, who died upon the cross to redeem us from sin. We worship and praise the Holy Spirit who is the seal of our salvation.

1. *Our eternal purpose* is to know God and to glorify him as God, and let our life shine so others will see God. Our devotion and ultimate loyalties are to the Father, who is over all and in all and through all; to Jesus the Son, who has been declared both Lord and Christ; and to the Holy Spirit, who lives in us and empowers us to overcome the workings of the sinful nature (Acts 2.22–36, Rom 8.12–28).
2. *The cornerstone* of our faith is our belief in Jesus Christ. Everything we hold dear in our faith originates from his words and his way of life (John 3.16, John 12.47–48, 1 John 2.5–6).
3. *The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God.* It is sharp, powerful, effective, challenging, exposing, and encouraging when it is revered, studied, preached, taught, and obeyed because it is from our Creator and therefore relevant for all generations (1 Tim 4.13, 2 Tim 3.16–17, 4.1–5, Heb 4.12–13).

GOSPEL: THE WORK OF GOD

The culminating event of the Christian faith occurred between the time of the Passover and Pentecost at the end of the Gospels through early Acts. The death, burial and resurrection of the perfect Lamb of God are the substance of our faith. What the first twenty chapters of Exodus are to the Jews (as God rescued and brought them to Sinai to hear the law) is very much what the events in Jerusalem were for disciples. Many were eyewitnesses to events of the atonement, the risen Jesus as "both Lord and Christ," and heard the promise that was for everyone, even "those who are far off."

4. *Our salvation* totally depends on the work of God, prompted by his own mercy and grace, not our good deeds. That work redeems those who hear, believe and obey the Gospel message through baptism into Christ through their faith in God's power and continue to remain faithful unto death (Rom 2.7, Acts 2.22–37, Eph 2.8–10, Col 2.12, Heb 10.32–39, Jas 1.12).

5. *Our earthly mission* involves every member's participation in the *Great Commission* to "Seek and save what was lost," in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to all parts of the world. As we go about this mission, our testimony must be consistent with a Christ-like life of doing good deeds and supporting and encouraging other Christians and churches around the world. In imitation of Jesus' mission, we are committed to remembering the poor by demonstrating compassion to those who suffer by regularly doing whatever we can to lessen their burdens and supporting group benevolent efforts through international agencies such as HOPE *worldwide* and others (Matt 28.19–20, Acts 10.37–38, Col 3.1–6, Luke 19.10, Gal 2.10, Jas 1.27).

6. *Our motivation* to love God, love each other and love the lost is prompted by God's love for us, demonstrated in its greatest form by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on a cross for our behalf (2 Cor 5.14–21, 1 John 3.16, Luke 10.27).

THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE: THE SURRENDER OF GOD'S CHILDREN

As disciples of Jesus, we surrender our lives to his Lordship. We rejoice in our adoption as God's children, and each accepts the call to be holy and follow the example of Jesus.

7. *Our conversion* begins with belief in Jesus as God's Son, and in his death and resurrection from the dead. Subsequent steps must include unmistakable repentance of sin, embracing discipleship, and confession that "Jesus is Lord." Finally, we become Christians at the miracle of rebirth with our immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins and the promise that God will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20.31, Luke 14.25–33, Acts 2.38–41, Rom 10.9, Titus 3.3–5).

8. *Our personal discipleship* to Christ begins with our *total commitment* to the Father, who is over all and through all and in all. It involves an understanding of and a commitment to his terms of surrender to his Lordship, a daily decision to deny self and persevere to the very end (Luke 9.23ff; 14.9).

9. *Our holiness* in daily living is a command from God. From baptism we are called to be set apart from the world and the ways of the world (sanctified) and live as saints of God (Eph 1.1, Eph 2.1–4, 1 Thess 4.3–8, 1 John 2.15–17). With holiness in mind, *the romantic and marriage* relationships of Christians are to be pursued with only those who "belong to the Lord" as defined by Scripture (2 Cor 6.14–7.1, 1 Cor 7.39).

THE CHURCH COMMUNITY: SHARING IN FELLOWSHIP AND STRENGTHENING

As members of the body, we are bonded by our immersion in water that united us with Christ's death and brought with it the promise of absolute forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and a new life; our hope of heaven and the gift of eternal life; the church body and our devotion to being members of the family of God—a community that helps its members grow to be like Jesus.

10. *Our membership* in each congregation constitutes baptized disciples, men and women who have pledged to live their lives as saints of God in the holiness he requires. Our members agree to strive to be devoted, not only to their Maker, but to the body life of the church. This includes making wholehearted efforts, for example, to attend each applicable meeting of the body, and pursuing joyful, watchful,

challenging, and encouraging “*one another*” *relationships* in which we spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Acts 2.42, Rom 12.10, Heb 3.12–13, 10.24–25).

11. *Our community worship* includes our devotion to God’s Word, prayer, fellowship, and *the Lord’s Supper* as a weekly sharing in the presence of Christ as a sacred event—breaking the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine together. As a community imitating the first century disciples, we give a *willing sacrifice* to God as a fragrant offering and a sign of our thankfulness. Since everything we enjoy in life is a gift from God, we agree to cheerfully and sacrificially contribute of our finances to the church so that the ministry of Jesus will advance throughout our communities and around the world (Acts 2.42–47, 1 Cor 10.17–34, 1 Cor 9.7–14, Phil 4.14–19).

12. *We believe in the church supporting women* as they serve a vital ministry role in evangelizing, baptizing, teaching, counseling, and training other women. In addition, we recognize the value and significant influence that all sisters can have in the lives of the brothers (1 Cor 9.5, Titus 2.3–4, Acts 18.24–26, Rom 16.1–15).

13. *The decision-making* responsibilities of established congregations belong to the individual congregation. We are also resolved to pursue and maintain our congregation’s links with other congregations and individual Christians—soliciting, giving and receiving input and godly influence from those outside our local congregation (1 Pet 5.5).

14. *Our communication* within the church and outside of our brotherhood should always be genuine, respectful and never deliberately antagonistic. We affirm the authority of exemplary leadership—including the twin shepherding responsibilities to build up the church according to her needs and discipline the church in order to protect her (1 Pet 2.17).

15. *Mature conflict resolution* is a priority to our churches and may sometimes require help from outside our own congregation. We agree to obey the scriptures that insist on godly conflict resolution, renouncing gossip and slander (1 Cor 5.1–13, 6.1–8, Phlm).

